

REMARKS

Claims 1 to 90 have been cancelled or withdrawn. Claims 91 to 104 are new.

New claim 91 distinguishes the invention from the cited prior art (Thompson; Medvick) by specifying very clearly that flange has a two part body including a first portion made of sintered powdered metal and a second portion of a metal other than a sintered powdered metal. Note especially that this two-part construction relates to the body of the flange itself, which is not the case with the prior art. Thompson, for example, discloses a second part, but it is just an annular main seal 9, a sacrificial "O" ring seal 15 or an annular ring 18, i.e. it is just a means for sealing between two ends of pipe lengths 3a and 3b rather than constituting part of the body of the flange. This distinction is important, and perhaps has not been made sufficiently clear in previous amendments and argument. The prior art shows that the overall assembly may have two parts, i.e. a body or flange and a seal, but in this case it is the body itself which has two parts; the seal would be part no. 3.

This is particularly advantageous in terms of production costs. This is especially true where stainless steel is used, in view of the high cost of stainless steel, especially recently. The invention permits, for example, part of the body to be made of stainless steel for corrosion resistance, while using powdered metal for less corrosion-prone portions.

Claim 92 recites that body has an element shaped to receive an annular sealing gasket, i.e. a third part, in effect, corresponding to the annular main seal 9 of Thompson. Claims 93 and 94 are specific examples of the element shaped to receive the sealing gasket, claim 94 reading particularly on Fig. 33, for example, the recess being indicated by reference no. 340.

Claims 95 and 96 are even more specific, again reading particularly on Fig. 33, for example.

Claims 97 to 102 are closely corresponding method claims. It is submitted that they should be allowed along with the product claims, since they are so closely related as to constitute a single invention not requiring a separate search.

With respect to the Examiner's comments in regard to the election filed on April 25, 2005, Applicant respectfully submits that Invention 1, Species 2, sub-species 1 was elected which relates to Figures 26 to 34 and 43A to 46. A copy of Applicant's response is enclosed for the Examiner's review.


In view of the preceding, Applicant believes that the application is now in condition for a Notice of Allowance, which Applicant respectfully requests.

Yours truly,

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Encls.

1. Response to Office Action dated February 25, 2005 (includes Extension of Time Request)
2. Auto Reply Facsimile Transmission dated April 25, 2005

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